

Voiceover: From the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.

Sheryl Cannady: Now you are about to be sworn in as the 14th Librarian of Congress. How does that feel?

Carla Hayden: It's such an honor to be sworn in, first, as the 14th Librarian of Congress, and also to be nominated. It's a presidential nomination as well. So as a career librarian it's really almost a dream come true. The confirmation process was really an eye-opener for me in so many ways, because I got to meet legislators that were committed to not only the nation's history, but making information available and the good will. So many of the legislators were historians. There were a few that were actually musicians and that really had an interest in the Library of Congress.

That was just a wonderful thing that made me very pleased that I was confirmed, but also that I'll have an opportunity to work with people who understand the importance of the Library of Congress. I just want to thank them. This is an opportunity. I'm going to have other opportunities, but an opportunity to really thank them for listening, but also giving me insight into how the library can serve them and the nation better.

Sheryl Cannady: How did you mark that special day? Did you do anything special that day, knowing that you would become the first woman and the first African American to ever hold that position?

Carla Hayden: The thing that I did to mark that day was to share it with my mother, who has been such an inspiration to me, a *noodge* at times – and to be able to share that with her and to really thank her for making it possible for me to be in that position. I was just so thankful, and I did say a prayer that I was just thankful that she could be there. I know she'll always be with me in spirit, but to physically be there was a special time.

Sheryl Cannady: You come from a family of musicians. How did you decide to go into librarianship?

Carla Hayden: I came from a family of musicians, and it became obvious as I approached my teenage years that I didn't have the talent that they had, but I always loved to read and my earliest memories were in Florida in a studio as my parents practices, my dad on violin, my mom was his accompanist, and I was under the grand piano – and they would put books down there with me and toys. And before they would start practicing he had to play the "Banjo and the Fiddle," and one of the first things I'm going to do when I take my

in-depth tour of the music department is to get a copy of the "Banjo and the Fiddle."

Sheryl Cannady: Wow.

Carla Hayden: They had to play that song, and it's a kind of lively song and kind of back and forth, and then I would be okay. So librarianship was really an adventure for me, to find out that there is a profession that was dedicated to making books and reading and knowledge available to people, and that just seemed ideal.

Sheryl Cannady: There was a book that you loved apparently as a young girl.

Carla Hayden: One of the books that I loved as a young girl, and it was the first time I found out about library fines –because I was in Queens at that point, PS 96, and right across from the school was a branch library. I'm not sure who put that book in my hand, but someone knew that a little girl, who was about eight years old with pigtails, might like a book that was called – and still is in print – *Bright April*, about a little girl with pigtails who was brown. At that time, and this goes back to when I was a child, there weren't that many books that reflected me or children of color. I loved that book and I checked it out and checked it out and checked it out and checked it out, and then finally the fines came. But I still have a visceral feeling when I see the wonderful illustrations in that book.

Sheryl Cannady: Thinking back to the time when you decided to become or go into library science, what were some of your early goes? Did you ever, obviously, think that you would get to the pinnacle position of Librarian of Congress?

Carla Hayden: When I discovered that librarianship was a profession, you received degrees and things, I was actually coming right out of undergrad and going to the Chicago Public Library in between, thinking of what I was going to do and jobs and things. I saw a colleague who had just graduated and they said, "They're hiring people at the library."

So I went up and I went and became a library associate. Then within a week I was assigned to a small storefront library on the south side of Chicago, with a young lady who was going to graduate school. She was on floor, in jeans, having story time with children with autism.

I thought, "Wait a minute. This is a different type of profession and you're bringing things right there to people," and I was hooked. So

it was almost – and when I say hooked, I mean I really was. I like this.

My first job, interestingly enough, at that little branch, was filing Library of Congress card sets in the card catalog. So I'm very familiar with the card sets *[laughs]*. It just opened my eyes after that to what you could do, and then over time, seeing what libraries could do in communities and how they could help people.

So at this point to be part of an institution that has so many opportunities to help people in so many ways, from the scholars to the people who really want to just find out more about the nation's history –or get inspiration is just I think the ultimate in terms of what started with getting hooked back then.

Sheryl Cannady: How do you think your perspective will be reflected in the institution during your tenure?

Carla Hayden: As the first woman and the first African American, I think my perspective will be really part of a continuum of the librarians who have had different professions and have come from different backgrounds. There have been lawyers. There have been librarians. There have been publishers and authors and historians and scholars. So I think that what I will bring is just adding on to the different perspectives, and also just being a caretaker, but also someone who is carrying the torch, too.

Sheryl Cannady: You mentioned caretaker. Why do you think librarians are true caretakers of the nation's, if not the world's, culture and heritage?

Carla Hayden: Librarians, and we even have a t-shirt that was printed up, "The original search engines." Librarians have felt – and really it's almost a creed of making sure that as much knowledge and information is preserved and made available for people, for making life decisions, but also for taking trips internally, externally, and that there's really a belief that reading and listening to creative output and all these things really enhance the human experience. So librarians are dedicated to that.

Sheryl Cannady: You are also the second trained librarian to serve. What are some of the qualities and skills that librarians have that people might not understand or appreciate?

Carla Hayden: I think librarians, we have a pretty strong stereotype, from the Ichabod Crane to that movie, *It's a Wonderful Life*, when the lady comes out at the end and she's a librarian in that. I think people

might not realize that librarians are really dedicated to making sure that information is available and that we like to say, "Books battle it out on the shelves." You have different viewpoints and you let the public and the person decide. Your job is to make it available. That's something I think people might not realize, that they're sometimes a little feisty and that goes against the stereotype.

Sheryl Cannady: What are some of the qualities that you think are important for leading an institution like the Library of Congress?

Carla Hayden: I think in leading an institution like the Library of Congress that has certain mandates to serve Congress, to also be responsible for the copyright process, and that also has the responsibility to preserve and protect valuable materials, but make them accessible as well, is to have openness to working with the – we call them in librarianship the special forces of librarianship. The staff members who are at the Library of Congress are considered to be the ultimate in terms of professionalism. So one of the qualities that I think will be very helpful and that I'm really excited about is to take in all of the input and the experience that the people who have been working here have and work together to chart a way to share that excitement and that dedication to what is here with all kinds of people.

Sheryl Cannady: Our staff really are major treasures, very, very true.

Carla Hayden: I think people might not realize that even though a library will have invaluable treasures, and the Library of Congress of course has just – it's almost – you can't imagine all of the things that are here and that's part of what I'm excited about being part of, making sure people know and also that they have access to it. But the greatest resource is the person who's helping you either find it or who knows about it because if it's not brought to you or you have somebody who really can tell you about something, it's not quite as valuable to you. So that person, the staff, those are the people that really make it come alive.

Sheryl Cannady: What do you see as the role of the Library of Congress? Or you could actually answer it as the role of the Librarian of Congress, whichever way you want to answer it.

Carla Hayden: Well, the role of the Library of Congress is really threefold, to serve Congress and really provide a resource for legislators and their staff in terms of making legislation and policy. Another important part is that safeguarding the resources and making sure that they are preserved and are available in different formats. Then

the third is the fact that it is the nation's library and it's a national treasure, so looking at that and letting people know that right here in Washington, D.C., but also at the tip of your fingers you have the world's biggest and largest library.

Sheryl Cannady: What do you see as the biggest challenges for the library?

Carla Hayden: The biggest opportunity for the library is to make the wonderful treasures available to people in various formats and technology can be a wonderful tool. So many things are already digitized and available. So the opportunity to work with potential donors, to work with people who are interested in seeing this treasure opened up for everyone I think will be just a wonderful adventure, and also to make sure that while this is happening that we're taking care of the basic responsibilities of the library as well, serving Congress, having a robust copyright office that makes sure that the creators and the users of content are served effectively, and then making sure that everyone has access.

Sheryl Cannady: Turn our challenges into opportunities.

Carla Hayden: Well, there's a lot of opportunity. There really is.

Sheryl Cannady: So, what is your vision for the nation's library in the coming decades under your stewardship?

Carla Hayden: Well, my vision for this library is very simple, that people will realize that they have a national treasure and that it is part of their heritage, and everyone can find something in the Library of Congress, produced by the Library of Congress that relates to their lives or where they want to go. So that's my vision, that people will know LOC – there might be an app for that – but they will realize what a treasure that they have.

What I hope to accomplish with the dedicated staff of the library in the next ten years of the appointment is to really make more of the collections accessible in various formats. If we can say that we have collections in the next ten years that have never been seen digitally and that are used and that are tied in with curriculums around the country, and that people are going to at the end of ten years, if people are thinking of the Library of Congress as a go-to place in the stratosphere, really, for information and resources, that I think would be quite an accomplishment.

Voiceover: This has been a presentation of the Library of Congress. Visit us at LOC.gov.